

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04  
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01  
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /070 W  
-----132008Z 033407 /43

R 131842Z JAN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9463  
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 00634

E. O. 11652:GDS  
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, UK  
SUBJECT: UNION LEADERS CRITICIZE LABOR PARTY LEADER-  
SHIP: A STRAW IN THE WIND OF CHANGE?

REF: (A) LONDON 20060 (76); (B) LONDON 2038L (76)

SUMMARY: LEADERS OF BRITISH TRADE UNIONS--IN THE  
WORDS OF ONE OF THEM--"HAVE FIRED A WARNING SHOT  
ACROSS THE BOW" OF THE LABOR PARTY'S LEFT-WING LED  
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. AT A MEETING OF 33  
UNIONS CALLED TO CONSIDER PARTY FINANCES, MANY OF  
THEIR LEADERS STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE NEC FOR ITS  
CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT ON MANY  
CRITICAL ISSUES AND ITS FAILURE TO COUNTER EXTREME  
LEFTIST PENETRATION OF THE PARTY (REFTEL A). TOM  
BRADLEY, AN MP AND TRADE UNIONIST AND A FORMER CHAIR-  
MAN OF THE PARTY, SAID HE WAS "MOST ENCOURAGED" BY  
THE STRONG STAND AGAINST THE NEC LEADERSHIP, BUT DAVID  
BASNETT, A TOP TUC LEADER, INSISTS THAT IT DOES NOT  
REPRESENT A CALL TO ARMS BY UNIONS AGAINST THE NEC.  
JACK JONES WAS PRESENT BRIEFLY AND EMPHASIZED THE NEED  
FOR UNITY. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR HOW DEEP TRADE UNION  
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CRITICISM OF THE NEC GOES, BUT THERE APPEARS TO BE  
GROWING RESTIVENESS AMONG THE UNIONS WITHIN THE PARTY  
ABOUT THE UNSEEMLY IMAGE OF A PARTY EXECUTIVE AT ODDS  
WITH ITS OWN GOVERNMENT. THE NEC CANNOT SIMPLY IGNORE  
THE WARNING FROM THE UNIONS LEST IT RISK A MUCH  
SHARPER CHALLENGE TO ITS LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. 33 TRADE UNIONS SENT REPRESENTATIVES JANUARY 11 TO A MEETING CALLED TO CONSIDER THE PARTY'S FINANCIAL NEEDS (A 50,000 POUNDS STERLING APPEAL FUND TARGET SET LAST FALL NETTED ONLY 20,000 POUNDS STERLING), AND A LONG-TERM PROGRAM OF INCREASED FINANCIAL SUPPORT, INVOLVING STAGED PER CAPITA INCREASES FROM THE CURRENT ANNUAL 21 PENCE TO 32 PENCE BY 1980. THE PARTY'S FINANCIAL NEEDS RESULT FROM A COMBINATION OF COST INFLATION, PREVIOUS ANNUAL DEFICITS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE WHICH MAY FLOW FROM DEVOLUTION LEGISLATION AND DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. THE UNIONS, OF COURSE, ARE THE MAJOR SOURCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE PARTY, AND A MAJORITY OF THE UNION REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MEETING SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE THEIR CRITICISMS AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE NEC LEADERSHIP (WHOSE LEFT-WING ALSO INCLUDES TRADE UNIONISTS LIKE EMLYN WILLIAMS OF THE MINERS AND ALEX KITSON OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS).

3. JOE GORMLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINERS, WAS ONE OF THE MOST SEVERE CRITICS OF THE NEC'S CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT ON A NUMBER OF POLICY ISSUES (SUCH AS EXPENDITURE CUTS) WHICH HE SAID MAKES IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE UNIONS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE PARTY. HE ALSO EXPRESSED VERY STRONG CONCERN ABOUT THE INFILTRATION OF THE PARTY BY EXTREME LEFT-WINGERS INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TROTSKYIST "MILITANT FACTION" (REFTEL A). HE LATER TOLD US THAT IF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP DID NOT TAKE NOTE

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OF THESE TRADE UNION ANXIETIES, THERE COULD BE A REAL "BUST-UP" AT THE NEXT LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE. SIMILAR CRITICISM AND DEMANDS FOR NEC ACTION ON THE UNDERHILL REPORT CONCERNING EXTREME LEFT-WING PENETRATION OF THE PARTY WERE VOICED BY OTHER TRADE UNION LEADERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING, INCLUDING THOSE FROM CONSTRUCTION, POST-OFFICE, ENGINEERING, MUNICIPAL AND PROFESSIONAL, AND OTHER UNIONS. AS DEREK GLADWIN, AN IMPORTANT REGIONAL LEADER OF THE GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS UNION TOLD US: "WE WERE FIRING A WARNING SHOT ACROSS THE NEC'S BOW. SURE, EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO HIS SAY, BUT WHEN THE NEC SPENDS TIME OPENLY CRITICIZING WHAT AMOUNTS TO AN AGREEMENT (THE SOCIAL CONTRACT) BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TUC, WE HAVE TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE UNIONS ARE SIMPLY AN OPEN CASH REGISTER WHENEVER THE PARTY SHEDS BLOOD."

4. JACK JONES, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION, AND CURRENTLY THE TUC'S "MR.

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BIG," WAS MORE DISCREET DURING HIS BRIEF ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING. WHILE NOT OPENLY ATTACKING THE NEC, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN THE NEC AND THE GOVERNMENT WERE DAMAGING THE PARTY AND ENDANGERED ITS CHANCES IN THE NEXT BY-ELECTION WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN STECHFORD TO FILL THE SEAT VACATED BY ROY JENKINS. JONES MADE A STRONG PLEA FOR UNITY.

5. IMPLICATIONS DRAWN FROM THE MEETING VARY. TOM BRADLEY, ON THE RIGHT OF THE PARTY AND TRADE UNIONS, WAS "MOST ENCOURAGED" AND PLEASED AT THE HARDENING OF TRADE UNION ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. HE SEES THEM AS CLOSE TO A TURNING POINT. OTHER RIGHT WING TRADE UNIONISTS, SUCH AS JOHN SPELLAR OF THE ELECTRICIANS UNION WHICH IS LED BY FRANK CHAPPLE, VIEW THE MEETING AS REPRESENTING AN IMPORTANT SHIFT BY THE TRADE UNIONS WHICH THE NEC CAN IGNORE ONLY AT ITS PERIL. SPELLAR, AN ASTUTE YOUNG OBSERVER, RECOGNIZES THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR INTERNAL REASONS FOR UNIONS TO DISLODGE SOME OF THEIR OWN LEFT-WING REPRESENTATIVES ON THE NEC (WITNESS EMLYN WILLIAMS AND ALEX KITSON)  
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BUT CONSIDERS UNIONS COULD FIND IT MUCH EASIER TO VOTE OFF THE COMMITTEE SOME OF THE LEFT-WING WOMEN'S SECTION MEMBERS SUCH AS JOAN MAYNARD AND JUDITH HART.

6. ALLEN FISHER, A LEFT-OF-CENTER LEADER OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND HIMSELF A FREQUENT CRITIC OF THE GOVERNMENT ON EXPENDITURE CUTS, ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NEC AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS LED TO CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND CONCERN BY THE RANK AND FILE TRADE UNIONISTS. HE IS CONFIDENT HOWEVER THAT THE NEC WILL MODIFY ITS BEHAVIOUR TO MEET ITS CRITICS, ALTHOUGH MAINLY BY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF PROVOCATIVE RESEARCH PAPERS WHICH--THOUGH REPRESENTING LONG RANGE PARTY GOALS--VARY SHARPLY FROM CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES. DAVID BASNETT, THE MODERATE BUT NORMALLY CAUTIOUS LEADER OF THE GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS' UNION, WHICH WAS REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING BY THE MORE OUTSPOKEN GLADWIN, HAS TENDED TO DOWNPLAY ANY SIGN OF SCHISM BETWEEN THE UNIONS AND THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. HE INSISTS THAT THE MEETING DID NOT REPRESENT A CALL TO ARMS AGAINST THE NEC AND REMARKED THAT IT WAS ATTENDED MAINLY BY "SECOND ECHELON" REPRESENTATIVES.

7. COMMENT: THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNIONS' "WARNING SHOT" IS NOT YET CERTAIN. CLEARLY, THEIR WARNING DOES NOT REPRESENT A "REVOLT" AGAINST THE NEC, BUT RIGHT-WING PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO ENLIST INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY ARE HEARTENED. MODERATES ARE STILL UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE UNION LEADERS' CONCERN WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO MORE SPECIFIC VOTING INSTRUCTIONS TO THE UNION MEMBERS OF THE NEC OR INTO VOTES IN THIS YEAR'S NEC ELECTIONS. AT THE VERY LEAST, LABOR MODERATES BELIEVE THE EVENTS OF TUESDAY WILL CONSTRAIN THE NEC IN THE FUTURE AND INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE UNDERHILL

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REPORT WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVORABLY. AT BEST, THESE EVENTS COULD RESULT IN THE REPLACEMENT OF UP TO TWO OF THE EXTREME LEFT-WINGERS ELECTED FROM THE WOMEN'S SECTION LATER THIS YEAR. IT DOES NOT SEEM TO US THAT THE WARNING HERALDS THE TRADE UNIONS' RETURN TO THE VERY CONSERVATIVE POSTURE WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE ARTHUR DEAKINS, ERNIE BEVIN ERA, BUT THE TUC PENDULUM HAS IN FACT BEEN SWINGING TOWARD THE RIGHT IN RECENT YEARS, SUGGESTING THAT TUESDAY'S OUTPOURING OF

GRIEVANCE IS MORE THAN AN ISOLATED EVENT.

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## Message Attributes

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